

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 TAIPEI 07696 01 OF 02 300146Z

ACTION EA-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 TRSE-00 SS-14 INR-05 NSC-05 CIAE-00

NSAE-00 DODE-00 L-01 SP-02 PM-03 PRS-01 PA-01

IO-06 /045 W

-----036525 300230Z /14

R 300110Z DEC 77

FM AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5932

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY MANILA

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TAIPEI 7696

LIMDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, TW

SUBJECT: SPECULATION ON MARCH, 1978 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

RF:TAIPEI 3270

1. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION: WITH THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SCHEDULED TO ELECT A NEW PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT ON MARCH 21 AND 22, 1978, THERE IS NOT YET ANY CLEAR INDICATION OF HOW PREMIER CHIANG CHING-KUO (CCK) PLANS TO PLAY HIS DOMINANT HAND AND MAKE THE DIFFICULT CHOICE FACING HIM. (KMT NOMINATIONS FOR PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT WILL BE MADE FEBRUARY 14/15.) INFORMED SPECULATION HERE CREDITS HIM WITH TWO OPTIONS: 1) THE PRESERVATION OF THE STATUS QUO INHERENT IN THE PREMIER'S SIMPLY TAKING A CONCURRENT POSITION AS VICE PRESIDENT WHILE LEAVING YEN CHIA-KAN
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 TAIPEI 07696 01 OF 02 300146Z

AS FIGUREHEAD PRESIDENT, AND 2) CCK BECOMING PRESIDENT IN WHICH CASE NEW MEN WOULD APPEAR AS PREMIER AND VICE PRESIDENT. ALTHOUGH THERE ARE GOOD ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST EACH OPTION, THE EMBASSY IS INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT CCK WILL CHOOSE TO BECOME PREMIER CUM VICE PRESIDENT, AN ARRANGEMENT WHICH WOULD PUT HIM IN A POSITION TO TAKE OVER THE PRESIDENCY SHOULD YEN DIE OR BECOME

INCAPACITATED OR EVEN BEFORE THAT SHOULD CCK SO DESIRE. IT WOULD ALSO RELIEVE HIM OF THE NEED TO CHOOSE NEW MEN FOR THE OTHER TWO OFFICES--A SELECTION WHICH WILL BE WIDELY INTERPRETED AS REVEALING THE PREMIER'S CHOICE OF HIS OWN SUCCESSOR WHEN IN FACT HE MAY NOT YET HAVE MADE THAT CHOICE. HOWEVER, THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF CULMINATING HIS CAREER AS PRESIDENT MAY STILL PROVE IRRESISTIBLE TO CCK.

END SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.

2. WE HAVE HEARD THE FOLLOWING ARGUMENTS TO SUPPORT THE THESIS THAT CCK WILL RETAIN HIS CURRENT POSITION AS PREMIER, CONCURRENTLY ASSUME THE VICE PRESIDENCY, AND LEAVE YEN CHIA-KAN AS FIGUREHEAD PRESIDENT:

A) CCK COULD REMAIN IN DIRECT CONTROL OF AND IN DIRECT CONTACT WITH THE MINISTRIES OF GOVERNMENT.

B) HE WOULD AVOID TIME-CONSUMING PARTICIPATION IN STATE PROTOCOL AND COULD MORE EASILY CONTINUE THE INFORMAL HAND-SHAKING POLITICKING HE FAVORS.

C) HE WOULD AVOID ANY FEELING THAT HE WAS UNCEREMONIOUSLY DUMPING PRESIDENT YEN, OR THAT HE WAS PRESUMPTUOUS ENOUGH (AS SOME CHINESE CLAIM HE WOULD APPEAR) TO ASSUME THE PRESIDENCY X SOM AFTER THE KMT (OF WHICH HE IS CHAIRMAN) LOST MORE LOCAL ELECTIONS THAN EVER BEFORE.

D) HE WOULD NOT HAVE TO MAKE THE DIFFICULT CHOICES OF WHO SHOULD BE VICE PRESIDENT AND PREMIER. EITHER
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 TAIPEI 07696 01 OF 02 300146Z

OR BOTH OF THESE CHOICES WOULD BE READ AS HIS GROOMING A SUCCESSOR, AND CCK MAY NOT WISH SO TO TIP HIS HAND. IT IS MORE PROBABLY THAT HE HAS NOT YET FOUND A SUITABLE CANDIDATE TO SUCCEED HIM.

E) HE WOULD NOT HAVE TO FACE THE POTENTIAL DIFFICULTIES OF INSTALLING A TAIWANESE AS VICE PRESIDENT OR (MORE UNLIKELY) AS PREMIER.

3. ON THE OTHER HAND, ARGUMENTS FOR PREMIER BECOMING PRESIDENT INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

A) THE PRESIDENCY IS AT THE PINNACLE OF THE ROC, AND ITS OCCUPANT THEORETICALLY DEALS WITH THE VARIOUS YUANS AND DEPARTMENTS OF GOVERNMENT FROM A SUPERIOR POSITION, RATHER THAN THE THEORETICALLY CO-EQUAL ONE OCCUPIED BY THE PREMIER. THE PRESIDENT IS ALSO SUPREME COMMANDER OF THE ARMED FORCES.

B) HE WOULD HAVE TO WAIT SIX MORE YEARS FOR THE NEXT CHANCE TO BE ELECTED TO THE HIGHEST OFFICE, AND, AT HIS AGE, HE MAY FEEL HE CANNOT WAIT.

4. THE EMBASSY CURRENTLY BELIEVES THAT CCK WILL CHOOSE TO REMAIN PREMIER AND CONCURRENTLY TAKE ON THE POSITION

OF VICE PRESIDENT. THIS WOULD PUT HIM IN THE DIRECT LINE OF SUCCESSION TO THE PRESIDENCY, AND WOULD PROBABLY ALLOW HIM TO BECOME PRESIDENT ANY TIME HE WAS WILLING TO PAY THE SMALL PRICE IN EMBARRASSMENT ENTAILED IN GIVING THE APPEARANCE OF ASKING YEN TO STEP DOWN. IN THE MEANTIME, HE WOULD HAVE MORE TIME TO CONSIDER THE QUESTION OF GROOMING A SUCCESSOR OR SUCCESSORS.

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 TAIPEI 07696 02 OF 02 300152Z
ACTION EA-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 TRSE-00 SS-14 INR-05 NSC-05 CIAE-00
NSAE-00 DODE-00 L-01 SP-02 PM-03 PRS-01 PA-01
IO-06 /045 W
-----036615 300230Z /14

R 300110Z DEC 77
FM AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5933
INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY MANILA
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY SEOUL
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TAIPEI 7696

LIMDIS

5. THERE IS, HOWEVER, A GROWING TENDENCY AMONG THE INFORMED PUBLIC TO ASSUME THAT THE PREMIER WILL ULTIMATELY DECIDE TO RUN FOR PRESIDENT. TWO FACTORS IN PARTICULAR MAY COME TO OUTWEIGH THE ARGUMENTS AGAINST HIS BECOMING PRESIDENT. FIRST, HIS ADVISORS PROBABLY BELIEVE THAT THEY THEMSELVES WILL GAIN IF THEIR MENTOR BECOMES PRESIDENT, AND WILL URGE HIM IN INCREASINGLY STRONG TERMS TO RUN FOR THE OFFICE. SECOND, CCK HIMSELF MAY WANT TO ASSUME THE PRESIDENCY BECAUSE OF HIS PERSONAL DESIRE TO CAP HIS CAREER BY BEING PRESIDENT.

6. SHOULD CCK BECOME PRESIDENT, YU KUO-HUA (CONCURRENTLY CHAIRMAN OF THE SUPRA-MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE FOR ECONOMIC PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT AND GOVERNOR OF THE CENTRAL BANK) IS, BY MOST CURRENT ESTIMATES, THE MOST LIKELY CANDIDATE

FOR PREMIER. DARK HORSE CANDIDATES OCCASIONALLY
MENTIONED BY INFORMED OBSERVERS INCLUDE LI KUO-TING
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 TAIPEI 07696 02 OF 02 300152Z

(WHOSE CHANCES HAVE IMPROVED WITH HIS APPARENT
RECOVERY FROM HIS HEART ATTACK), SUN YUN-HSUAN, AND
EVEN LAI MING-TANG. SPECULATION ON A NEW VICE
PRESIDENT IS MORE DIFFUSE. SOME MONTHS AGO, TAIWAN
PROVINCIAL GOVERNOR HSIEH TUNG-MIN WAS GENERALLY GIVEN
THE INSIDE TRACK, BUT HIS DETERIORATING HEALTH IS
THOUGHT TO HAVE ALL BUT REMOVED HIM FROM THE RUNNING.
NEVERTHELESS, THE JOB COULD BE SUCH A SINECURE, AND
FINDING ANOTHER APPROPRIATE CANDIDATE COULD BE SO
DIFFICULT, THAT HSIEH MAY BE PERSUADED TO TAKE THE JOB
IF IT WERE TO MAKE NO DEMANDS ON HIM. IF HE DOES,
MINISTERS WITHOUT PORTFOLIO LI TENG-HUI AND CH'U
CH'UANG-HUAN, MINISTER OF INTERIOR CHANG FENG-HSU,
MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS LINCHINYENG AND TAIPEI
MAYOR LIN YANG-KANG ARE ALL RUMORED TO BE POSSIBLE
CANDIDATES FOR PROVINCIAL GOVERNOR. IF HSIEH DOES NOT
BECOME VICE PRESIDENT, THE SAME OFFICIALS ARE CONSIDERED CANDID-
ATES FOR VICE PRESIDENT. (ALL OF THEM ARE RANKING TAIWANESE
OFFICIALS. THE POST OF PROVINCIAL GOVERNOR IS NOW
THOUGHT TO BE RESERVED TO TAIWANESE, AND THE GENERAL
EXPECTATION HERE IS THAT IF CCK BECOMES PRESIDENT AND
YU KUO-HUA PREMIER, THE VICE PRESIDENCY SHOULD ALSO
BE RESERVED FOR A TAIWANESE.)

7. COMMENT: THERE IS STILL A REMARKABLE ABSENCE OF
CONFIDENT AND INFORMED PREDICTION OF HOW CCK WILL PLAY
HIS HAND. THIS DOES NOT SURPRISE STUDENTS OF THE
PREMIER'S STYLE, WHO NOTE THAT HE USUALLY WITHHOLDS
ANY SIGN OF HIS OWN THINKING UNTIL HE IS READY TO
ANNOUNCE HIS DECISION. NEVERTHELESS, SOME AMOUNT OF
MEDIA PREPARATION WILL BE NEEDED HOWEVER HE CHOOSES TO
MOVE, AND THIS AT LEAST SHOULD GIVE US AN IDEA OF HIS
PLANS. IN THIS REGARD, WE WILL BE WATCHING PARTICULARLY
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 TAIPEI 07696 02 OF 02 300152Z

TO SEE IF A DECEMBER 20 EDITORIAL ENDORSEMENT OF
CHIANG CHING-KUO FOR PRESIDENT IN THE SMALL-CIRCULATION
TAICHUNG PAPER TAIWAN DAILY NEWS, AND A DECEMBER 27
UNANIMOUS RESOLUTION BY THE TAIPEI MUNICIPAL COUNCIL
URGING CCK TO RUN FOR PRESIDENT ARE ECHOED ELSEWHERE.
UNGER

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, ELECTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 30-Dec-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977TAIPEI07696
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780002-0606
Format: TEL
From: TAIPEI
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t1977122/aaaaabhf.tel
Line Count: 223
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: ef770efd-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 04-Jan-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 134428
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SPECULATION ON MARCH, 1978 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION RF:TAIPEI 3270
TAGS: PINT, TW
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/ef770efd-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009